

China and American Imperialist Policy

By EARL BROWDER

Hankow, May 9, 1927.

WHEN the American gunboats joined with the British in shelling Nanking on March 24, there was great joy in the interventionist camp, particularly in the Shanghai British newspapers. This act and the later identic notes, was taken as a sign that the U. S. Government had bowed before the British policy in China. Indeed, there was good reason for such belief, for if the shelling of Nanking and the following notes were not to be merely a first step toward a broad application of armed force to crush the Chinese revolution, then it became a silly, futile, irresponsible act, without even imperialist logic.

The closing days of April, however, have shown that American imperialist policy is not so simple in relation to China. Coolidge's public speeches, coupled with the instructions sent to MacMurray in Peking, have again halted the projected British intervention, which was to have occupied Hankow. The Shanghai British press, in high rage, is denouncing the U. S. Government in unmeasured terms for this "treason".

Thus, again, has American imperialist policy performed one of its characteristic wobbles on the question of China. This is not an accident. These seemingly uncoordinated and incomprehensible contradictions in American policy in China are the result of the struggle within American imperialist circles, a struggle between two lines of policy toward China. This struggle has not yet been decisively settled; American policy still wavers uncertainly between the two. It is very important that these two policies, and the forces behind them, be understood better.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN RIVALRY

A MAJOR feature of world politics is the struggle between Great Britain and America for control of the world markets. This struggle was, for many years, centered in Central and South America and the islands of the Carribean Sea. Up until 1900, American policy in China consisted mainly of dragging along in the rear of Great Britain. Quickly after the Spanish-American war, however, the United States awoke to its

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"manifest destiny" in the Pacific; that struggle which began primarily as one for control of the Caribbean, had ended by giving America the Philippine Islands and Hawaii—major positions in the Pacific. From this point onward, the Anglo-American rivalry changed its center to the Pacific Ocean.

American imperialist policy in the struggle for control of Latin-America had been crystallized in what is known as the Monroe Doctrine. This is the "closed door" of the Americas, against European powers—and Japan. But in the Far East, American imperialism found all the positions already occupied, mainly by Great Britain and Japan. And these two rivals of the rising American power, were still in close alliance with one another. America was still, in spite of holding the Philippines, a rank "outsider" in the Far East. Hence the cry for the "open door" in China, the demand for a "fair share" of the imperialist loot, became sharp and imperative on the part of the United States. What had been in Latin-America the "closed door", in the Far East was suddenly transformed into the "open door". But in this there is no contradiction, when one looks beneath the surface, for the driving force in imperialist politics is not logic, nor "justice", etc., but plain, unadorned greed and lust for markets.

As the United States became a Pacific power, especially with the opening of the Panama Canal, a new Pacific orientation began to take place in her foreign policy. An "independent" line in China became more and more insistently demanded. Great markets of untold riches were to be had—but Great Britain was already in ahead, with a monopolistic position, and a powerful ally, Japan.

The World War withdrew imperialist attention for a few years from the Far East, except that of Japan. The latter, however, was busy with the notorious "21 points" and in occupying Shantung and Manchuria. American imperialism was quite shocked when, at the Versailles peace conference in 1919, she realized to what an extent she had been frozen out of China. Not only was Great Britain sitting tighter than ever, but also, with British support, Japan was taking everything else in sight.

JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

PRESIDENT Wilson at Versailles knew quite well that American imperialism was opposed to sanctioning Japan's grab in China. But, as the price of support by Great Britain and Japan for his League of Nations idea, he acquiesced in it. This was his undoing, for American imperialism turned against him and destroyed him. By this time, imperialist interests were

keenly aware that in the Pacific, particularly in China, the destinies of the world would soon be fought out.

But to fight immediately against both Great Britain and Japan was too dangerous. They must be separated, the alliance must be broken. This was achieved by a combination of threats and concessions to Great Britain. At the Washington Conference, 1921, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was broken; and here also, again, China was sacrificed to a compromise between Great Britain and the United States. This was the logical outcome; the U. S. was and is interested in China only insofar as she can use China against her rivals, or gain direct advantages for herself. (Here let me add a word on August 8: the inability of the U. S. and Britain at the recent Naval Conference to find even a temporary formula of compromise is due, primarily, to the re-establishment of the alliance with Japan, a "secret" understanding that is known to the whole world.)

American imperialism's rivalry with Japan is not so broad or deep as that with Great Britain. *But it is more immediate and more acute*, it contains a *more immediate threat of war*. The fundamental reasons for this are, that the U. S. must defeat one at a time, and chooses Japan for the first struggle because (a) Japan is the weaker, the more easily defeated, and (b) because it is easier and more profitable to find temporary compromises with Great Britain than with Japan; the latter has contacts with America only where the interests clash sharply, while British can still give a quid pro quo.

It is of more than ordinary interest to remark again, that the imperialism of the United States is firmly convinced that it will soon fight a war against Japan. It was barely two years ago that an official in the Navy Department created a great scandal by declaring publicly that the American Navy was preparing for such a war. One of the most widely-read and discussed books in years, has been Hector Bywater's description of an imaginary war between the U. S. and Japan, supposed to occur in 1931-32. And the following news despatch from an American news-service emphasizes the same point:

"Washington, Feb. 21:—Favorable report has been made by the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs on the bill providing for a \$3,500,000 depot in the State of Nevada to store naval munitions.

"Storing of naval munitions for the Pacific fleet and Pacific Coast defenses at a point in the desert, far inland and across the mountains from any Pacific Port, has never before been seriously suggested. Fear of a Japanese attack upon the Pacific coast determined the decision."

IN TRANSITION BETWEEN TWO POLICIES

FROM all this tangle of rivalries and greeds (with many more complications and factors which we have no time to go into now) rise the hesitations, the vacillations, the seeming contradictions of American actions and policy in China. American imperialism is in a period of transition between two policies, the old policy of accord and accommodation with the other imperialist powers, and a new policy of driving for complete American dominance in the Pacific. It is very probable that for several years, the United States will waver and shuffle about on each critical question in regard to China, and, according to the exigencies, of the moment, will make a trade with Britain, whereby British policy in China gains a temporary support, or, on the contrary, will take another step in the establishment of that much-heralded "independent" policy, which is coming to realization slowly—but surely.

This characteristic wavering of American policy toward China is especially expressed in events since 1919; it is seen in Wilson's negotiations at Versailles; it comes out sharply at the Washington Conference; it is seen in the attitude towards the Nationalist movement; it was expressed in the shelling of Nanking and the identic notes, followed by withdrawal from the joint action. It will be expressed again and again in the events to come.

All these apparent waverings, hesitations, vacillations, can be understood only if studied, not as manifestations of a policy toward China considered as a "separate question", but rather as a part of a very complicated three cornered struggle of America against Japan and Great Britain, and each against all the others. And the arena of this great battle is not only China, but the entire world.

WHAT DOES AMERICAN IMPERIALISM REALLY WANT?

IT is clear that America is gradually developing a policy in the Far East that sharply contradicts that of Great Britain. What does this new policy mean for Chinese people, for the Chinese revolution? Is it directed toward helping the Chinese people to throw off their old fetters and emerge as a free, strong, united Nation?

There are two sides to the answer to these questions. First, it must be said that the existence of deep, sharp struggles between the imperialist powers, is decidedly favorable to the Chinese revolution. Imperialist rivalries constitute one of the great international factors which insure the success of the Chinese revolution. (The other chief international factors are (a) support by the Soviet Union, which has broken the im-

perialist world front; (b) the national liberation movement in other lands; (c) the inner decline of British economic life; and (d) the growing revolutionary workingclass forces).

But if the existence of different policies toward China on the part of Great Britain and America is, objectively, an aid to the Chinese revolution, this is a very different thing from saying that it is the policy of the United States to help the revolution. Nothing could be farther from the truth than such a statement. American imperialism wants to halt the revolution, far short of its goal of social and economic revolution; although quite willing to see British imperialism driven out of China, her aim is to replace it with American imperialism; wishing to see a Chinese Government able to resist the aggressions of Japan, she wants that Government weak enough that it must lean for support on America; opposing the dismemberment of China, it is because American imperialism expects, itself, to hold the hegemony of all China. In short, American imperialist policy is just as ruthless, greedy and oppressive as that of Britain. Its goal is more ambitious, being complete control of all China. It is ultimately more dangerous, because it is more powerful and fights with subtler weapons. After British imperialism is defeated in China, American imperialism will press forward for its conquest, the campaign for which is already under way.

CORRUPTION BY MACHINERY AND LOANS

AMERICAN imperialism relies, for its conquest of China, upon its enormous surplus of machinery and money, which are the two things of which China stands most in need. American imperialism looks upon China as the field, which it needs above all else, for great loans and investments which will create great markets for steel, Machinery, etc. But American imperialism will require "guarantees", which will be of such a nature as to stop short the development of the Chinese revolution, and turn Chinese national independence into a thin shadow. Such conditions will doubtless include the following:

1. Workers and peasants must not have any decisive role in the Chinese Government. Trade unions must be "tamed" or destroyed.

2. All talk about socialism, nationalizing the railroads, banks, and heavy industry, must be suppressed. Chinese industry, transportation, and finance, must be based upon private ownership.

3. Mortgages must be given to American imperialists on all important works, accompanied by American supervision and control.

Given such conditions, American imperialism would doubt-

less be glad to grant all other things as nonessential. The American money lords expect, by finance and machinery, to accomplish what Britain failed to do with warships and troops—the conquest of China. America also uses warships—but they follow after the mortgages. That is a later stage. Witness Haiti, Nicaragua, etc.

AMERICA, CENTER OF WORLD REACTION

IT will be well for Nationalist China to remember, when dealing with America, what is the latter's role in world politics today. It is the role of center, organizer, leader of the reactionary forces of the world. American imperialism today draws tribute from all parts of the world, and its accumulating wealth as constantly goes forth to further corrupt, enslave, exploit.

It is not simply due to a whim on the part of Coolidge, that the United States refuses to have any relation with the Union of Soviet Republics. It is, on the contrary, because there is fundamental opposition, antagonism, of the United States to every power which is able to resist its aggressive expansion, its imperialist penetration; this antagonism deepens to bitter rage when, as in the case of the Soviet Union, this other power becomes the center, organizer, and leader of the exploited peoples and classes of the world.

Toward revolutionary China, American imperialism holds the same deep antagonism. This enmity of American imperialism, the Chinese revolution cannot avoid unless it is ready to deny itself, destroy and halt its own work, submit itself to the violation of American imperialism in the place of British imperialism.

But if this enmity cannot be avoided, it can be defeated. Although the most powerful imperialism in the world, even America, in alliance with all the other imperialist governments, broke her teeth on the Soviet Union and was forced to retreat in baffled rage. That was because, not only were the people of Russia solidly united behind the revolutionary party, but also because they had the assistance of allies, the revolutionary workers within the imperialist lands. China has the same powerful allies, plus the greater national liberation movements, plus the successful revolutionary power of the Soviet Union. With these forces, China may resolutely press forward in her revolution, confident in the victory over British imperialism, and also over the more powerful enemy, American imperialism. To this end, the policies and forces of American imperialism should be closely studied in detail. When the power of American imperialism is broken, that is the day of victory for the world revolution.

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